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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NEW SOCIALIST PARTY ECHOES CHAVEZ, BOUTERSE

11. (U) SUMMARY: A new socialist party, the Forum for Socialism and Democracy (ASD), announced its formation in Suriname. The party expresses a populist leftist ideology and made ideological references to Venezuela among other countries. Two of the party's founders have strong ties to former military strongman Desi Bouterse.
END SUMMARY

Ideology

12. (U) Slogans calling for changes in government policy and an end to corruption, and the unveiling of a red flag with a black star marked the establishment of the Forum for Socialism and Democracy (ASD) on November 8. The founders referred to countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, and Chile, and called for a middle road between socialism and capitalism, saying it is the only way forward for Suriname. The party also made use of the Chavista phrase "new wind." The five ASD founders said their party is people-centered and will focus on poor and disadvantaged groups in Suriname. The ASD called for structural political changes in Suriname and introduction of a system where development and prosperity for the country is realized through developmental projects carried out by neighborhood communities - a scheme advocated by Desi Bouterse in the 1980's.

Leadership and Background

13. (U) The ASD was established by Satish Baldewsingh, Evert Tjon, Imro Thompson, Raymond Overman, and Ludwich van Mullier. Noteworthy is that two of the founders of the party, Ludwich van Mullier and Evert Tjon, are close friends of Bouterse, Suriname's former military strongman. In 1999, Tjon served as chairman of the Committee "Hands off Suriname." In that capacity he lobbied the Government of Suriname and the Parliament on numerous occasions to cite Suriname's right to self-determination as the justification for halting the Netherlands' investigations of Bouterse. Along with investigating him for drug trafficking, the Netherlands pushed for Bouterse's conviction in the case of the December 1982 murders of fifteen opponents of his government.

14. (U) COMMENT: Party politics in Suriname have historically been fluid, with frequent forming, splitting, merging, and morphing of parties. In addition, due to disillusionment with the current government and to Bouterse's tainting the opposition by his membership in it, there are now calls in Suriname for entirely new parties to take the stage. However, aside from being more overtly socialist, the ASD's ideology closely aligns with that of Bouterse's National Democratic Party, leaving little niche for the ASD to fill. With 22 political parties already active, it is doubtful ASD will find traction by the elections in 2010. END COMMENT

